







# A REPLY

TO A

GASTON CO. PREACHER

BY

REV. F. FELIX, O. S. B.,  
PASTOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH,

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*Permissu Superioris.*

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St. Vincent Abbey, Beatty P. O., Westmoreland Co., Pa.



**T**he Note here printed was handed to me by one of my parishioners to whom it was given by a Protestant friend, who had received it from a Gaston Co. preacher for that purpose. Did preachers confine their instructions to their own people, I might well hold my peace; when however, such things are written for Catholic perusal, it is fitting that they should not be permitted to circulate unnoticed. This must be my apology for replying to what in itself, merits only the silence of pity.

“T r u e: Christ established but one church, and that is set forth in the scriptures of the old and new Testaments, which scriptures are to be interpreted according to sound reason and common sense. During what is known as the dark or middle ages the doctrines of primitive christianity were terribly corrupted as every person knows who has given any attention to church history. Transubstantiation was not made an article of faith until the 13th century. Christ ordained but two sacraments, but the Church of Rome, during the dark ages, added five more. The doctrine that the Virgin Mary was conceived and born without sin was made an article of faith by Pius IX. about 25 years ago. Protestants deny no doctrine taught in the Scriptures or by the Apostles.”

*(No signature.)*

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P r e a c h e r. True: Christ established but one Religion.

P r i e s t. I am happy to know that the preacher concedes this great truth; yet he must remember that

ONE religion presupposes but ONE Church. More than one church would necessarily create different religions.

This ONE church must be visible on earth, for "a city seated on a mountain cannot be hid". (Math. 5, 14.) She must be built upon Peter, the Rock (Math. 16, 18.); firm, therefore, unchangeable and indestructible; she must last unto the consummation of the world (Math. 28, 20.). In her alone the Spirit of Truth abideth (John 14, 16.); this One church of the living God is the Pillar of Truth (Tim. 3, 15.). Endowed with such supernatural prerogatives, and guided by the Spirit of Truth, she could not fail in ages past nor can she in ages to come. To suppose fallibility in this One church would be blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. — This One church we must hear and obey (Math. 18, 17.); for she alone has the depository of Faith, without which it is impossible to please God. — (Hebr. 11, 16.)

**Preacher.** A Religion that is set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

**Priest.** The Religion of the New Law is Christ's religion; hence set forth in the New Testament only — predicted, however, and typified in the Old. . (See entire Epi. to the Hebr. especially Chap. II.)

**Preacher.** Which Scriptures are to be interpreted according to sound reason and common sense.

**Priest.** Plausible as this oft repeated fallacy may appear to the unthinking, and agreeable to human pride and vanity, it is the corner-stone of heresy, and destructive of all divine faith. Arius built upon it, and denied the Divinity of Christ; Pelagius built upon it, and Christ's Redeeming Blood became unnecessary. Luther reared the unsightly edifice of modern Protestantism upon it, and faith alone without good works sufficed to save souls;



Mormonism used the same corner-stone for its hideous temple in Utah, and America blushes for very shame. The fact that such monstrous evils necessarily result from the application of this principle of interpretation clearly proves that the Allwise Lawgiver, Jesus Christ, never established it, nor can He ever approve its use. The principle is absurd and leads to absurdity. No human lawgiver ever exposed his laws to such destruction. Why have we Courts? Are our laws more difficult of interpretation than the Revealed Law of God? I fear the preacher would fare but badly were he to go before the Supreme Courts — or even to Dallas — and demand that his “sound reason and common sense” should be the criterion instead of the official opinion of the Court. This false rule of interpretation is the germ of disintegration and final decay. It has drawn the scorn and contempt of its own adherents on Protestantism. De Wette, a Protestant, half in anger, half in sorrow says: “The dissolution of the Protestant-church is inevitable; her form is so thoroughly rotten that no further patching will avail. The whole structure of Evangelical religion is shattered, and few look with sympathy on its tottering fall. Within the compass of one square mile you may hear four, five or six different gospels. The people, believe me, mark this well; they speak most contemptuously of their teachers, whom they hold either for block-heads or knaves in teaching these different doctrines, because in their simplicity they believe that truth is ONE, and cannot conceive how each of these gentlemen can have a separate one of his own.”

Catholics accept the Bible as containing God's revealed will, in the sense in which God revealed and in no other. Honoring, loving, and sacredly revering the Bible, they do not make it the play thing of individual whims

and fancies — of individual likes and dislikes. They use sound reason and common sense when they read the Bible, trying always to understand it as God meant it; in difficult and doubtful passages they seek the unerring doctrine of Christ's Supreme Court on Earth — the Catholic Church. This course is certainly in perfect keeping with "sound reason and common sense" whilst at the same time it steers them safe of the spiritual destruction menaced by St. Peter, who, when speaking of scriptural difficulties says: "There are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest . . . to their own destruction" (II. Pet. 3, 16.). Aside from Scriptural arguments for the teaching authority of Christ's church (and the Holy Bible proves nothing plainer) is it not more reasonable to submit my intelligence to the long, uninterrupted, learned, holy interpretation of nearly 19 hundred years, than to the short-lived, changeable, often ignorant and unholy sayings and opinions of irresponsible preachers? This last course you necessarily force upon thousands of your own people who depend almost wholly on you and other preachers for what they believe. It seems to me, the average preacher should be the last man to appeal to "sound reason and common sense".

Preacher. During what is known as the dark or middle ages.

Priest. The "Dark" ages are also known as the "Christian age", the "Ages of Faith" etc. Of these titles preachers know little and care less. They prefer the dreadful name "Dark". Yes, subjectively — in as far as the preacher's knowledge is concerned — they are certainly very, very dark. Please read Protestant Dr. Maitland's "Dark Ages". Such reading would dispel some of your immense "darkness" on this subject. Well satisfied with themselves many half-educated men point the finger of



scorn at their great-grand-fathers of the Middle Ages because they imagine these old gentlemen to have lived in complete ignorance and inky darkness. Let us not forget that much of the light which shines so brilliantly in the 19th century, shone also, and in many respects even more brightly, in those past ages. Instead of taking up the old sadly-worn cry against our forefathers, let us try to learn a little more about them. — Study the “Dark” ages, and you will be surprised at the amount of good it will do you. There is Philosophy there — how much Anselm, Albert, Bonaventure, Bernard, Gilbert, Alcuin, Abelard, Thomas Aquinas etc. would teach us all! And the grand Universities and Colleges founded in those Ages! Perhaps, many do not even know their names, or knowing them, give all the credit to Modern times. There is Cambridge, Bologna, Paris Oxford, Florence, Rome, Milan etc. etc. How very humble some of our defamers of the past would become could some scholar of these Universities appear and put him through an ordinary examination as was required in by-gone ages! Then the master-pieces of art these ages produced! Painting, sculpture, music! Thank God, we can enjoy them though we may abuse the great genius which produced them! Thousands annually go to Europe to admire the Architecture of the “Dark” ages — in vain do we seek its Equal in our own. Take my advice: say less and study more of the “Dark” ages; this course will be to your credit as a descendant of men who then lived, to say nothing of your self-imposed position of a teacher of others.

**Preacher.** During these dark ages . . . . the doctrines of primitive Christianity were terribly corrupted, as every one knows who has given any attention to church history.

**Priest.** I am free to say that I gave my entire attention to sacred studies, including church history, for

many years, and I did not find what you affirm as a universal fact. There are thousands of Catholic historians, learned, devoted heart and soul to historical research, with all the libraries and archives of Europe open to them, and they contradict your assertion to a man. Not a few eminent Protestant historians, who have the courage to speak the truth, brand your assertion as untrue. In fact, your sweeping statement belongs to that category of untruths which began with Flacius and his co-laborers — was ever used as the most available weapon against Catholicity, and is now the great stock-in-trade of preachers in their tirades against “Romanism”. I am willing to ascribe it to your want of knowledge, but it is totally untrue and unworthy of one who poses as a teacher of his fellow-men. I am perfectly well aware of the fact that this — like many other things in your “letter of advice” — is not original — you read it and without further enquiry believed it and “passed it to your neighbor”. Sir Francis Palgrave, a Protestant historian, has well described the class of books, called histories, which spread such assertions when he says: “For their vileness, shabbiness and habitual disregard of veracity, they are a disgrace to the nobility of Truth.” (Hist. of Engl.) The Judgment-seat of Christ can alone reveal the awful amount of spiritual destruction caused by false writings. Whatever excuse we may find for the ignorant, yet well-meaning masses, it is very difficult to palliate the conduct of those who knowingly spread such slanders about the Immaculate Spouse of Christ, the Church. The baser and more shocking these false statements are, the more diligently are they spread — the more eagerly believed. Some good people in the immediate vicinity still look upon the Catholic Priest as a very monster — they read “Maria Monk”. But who put this vile, nasty tissue of lies into their hands



some years ago? God knows, and to Him we must leave the Actors. Thanks to Heaven! this filthy business is losing its attractions: already preacher Fulton must present his shameless book as a bribe to get listeners to his smutty talk. If preachers could only be persuaded to lay Catholic doctrines before their hearers as these doctrines are taught and believed by Catholics, we would certainly have no fault to find: as it is, either you know nothing of our holy Faith and draw upon your lively imaginations — paint horrible pictures, and in righteous indignation conjure your people to detest and hate what Catholics detested and hated 1500 years before your garbled religion existed; or you bear false witness against us by wilfully misrepresenting our teachings and belief. Read the following pen picture of a Roman Catholic by Dr. Reeves. It is true. Any departure from it in your future writings or preaching will be a wilful untruth.

“The Catholic is a professed follower of Jesus Christ. With a firm faith he believes all the divine truths which Jesus Christ, his only Redeemer, has revealed to the holy Catholic Church and nothing more. He admits no private opinions of men into his religious creed. From the Church, the infallible and spotless spouse of Christ (Rev. chapt. 20), he receives the canonical books of Scripture for his rule of faith, according to that sense in which she has always understood them. In all doubts, and in all controverted points of doctrine, he hold her to be the supreme judge, and to her decisions he humbly submits, as Christ commands (Math. 18, 17).

“In his religious character he pays to God alone that supreme and divine worship which belongs to the sovereign Creator of all things. The angels and the saints in heaven he does not worship, but honors as the friends and happy favorites of God; he commemorates their vir-

tues, grows virtuous by this example, and begs to be remembered by them before the throne of mercy; he respects their relics, as precious remnants of a Christian friend. Their images and their pictures he sets before his eyes, and pays a suitable respect to them, but he makes them not his idols; he neither worships nor invokes them, for he knows they cannot see, nor hear, nor help him; but respects them as the orphan respects the pictures of his deceased parents. It is a gross slander to say, that he adores or renders divine homage to the Virgin Mary: for although he looks up to her with peculiar reverence as to the mother of God and venerates her as such according to her own prophecy: 'Behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed' (Luke 1, 48); yet he still views her in the limited sphere of a pure creature. In the ineffable mystery of the holy Eucharist he adores Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, true God and true man, because, in the plain and obvious meaning of Christ's own words (Luke 22, 19.), he believes His sacred body and blood to be there really present, under the outward form of bread and wine. — a faith dear to the Christian heart and sanctioned by ages and by the writings of the primitive Christians. — In the adorable sacrifice of the mass he offers to God the pure and clean oblation as the prophet Malachi fortold (chap. I.), and as the Catholic Church has always done and thereby exhibits to the Almighty that sovereign honor of adoration, which cannot be given to any creature without the guilt of idolatry. He, in fine, believes, that for the comfort of repenting sinners Christ has given to the apostles (John 20, 23) and their successors in the priesthood, a power to remit sins for all such, who seek it with a true contrition of heart. Such, in brief, is the Roman Catholic religious character in matters of faith.



“To form his moral character, he takes the Gospel for his rule; he holds its precepts to be binding in conscience, and its counsels optional, but still very meritoriously embraced by those who aspire to a more eminent degree of religious perfection. In his civil character he is submissive to the constituted powers of the state, as the apostle directs (Rom. c. 13); by education he is taught to cultivate peace and social order; by principle he is a friend of his country, and to the government under which he lives. Hence, while he acknowledges in the Bishop of Rome all those spiritual prerogatives which Christ gave to St. Peter (John c. 21) the head of the apostles, for the government of the whole Church, he admits no obligations of allowing in him any civil jurisdiction over the independent rights of sovereigns in their temporal concerns. — To the fair-minded Protestant I may well say: ‘Read and study this character of a true Catholic: then compare it with the description you have read and heard. Now confess: have you not been imposed upon, and do you not plainly see that false witness has been borne against your Catholic neighbor? If so, continue your investigations honestly, prayerfully, and, like thousands of the best, most learned and most earnest Protestants, you will, with God’s grace, joyfully return to the Church of your Ancestors, the Holy, Roman, Catholic, Apostolic Church.’”

**P r e a c h e r.** Transubstantiation was not made an Article of Faith until the 13th century.

**P r i e s t.** This assertion is misleading and essentially untrue. The doctrine of Transubstantiation, or the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ was believed from the moment that “Jesus took bread and blessed and broke; and gave to his disciples and said: Take ye and Eat: This is my body” etc. (Math. 26., 26, 27 and 28). The word is of later date chosen by

the Church unmistakably to express a doctrine I might as well say Electricity is a modern production of nature because the word is new. The preacher seems to think the Catholic Church makes or creates matters of Faith. No, she does not. All the Church does do is: when she finds it necessary, she decides, and by her infallible decision declares a certain doctrine to have been revealed by God, and as such, to be binding on the conscience of her children. She never made a new doctrine, as little as the Supreme Court makes new laws; with this difference, however, that the Supreme Court is infallible only *de facto*, whereas the Church is infallible *de jure*, or in the full sense of the word. The preacher appeals to the belief of Primitive Christianity. He is right — for, if any can judge of what Christ taught by his Apostles, certainly those who lived at the same time or very soon after, could so judge. This is appealing to Tradition. Will the next Synod “discipline” the good man for admitting any authority save “The Bible alone?” — But what did the primitive Christians believe regarding the doctrine in question? Let me cite a few passages; perhaps it may be an encouragement to many a reader to study “Tradition” more earnestly.

St. Ignatius, I. Century. “I have no taste for corruptible food.... I wish for God’s bread.... which is flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.... I wish for God’s draught, His Blood which is love without corruption and life forever more.” (Ad. Rom. n. 7.)

Clement of Alexandria, II. Cent. “Eat my flesh and drink my blood. The Lord supplies us with these befitting aliments, and gives flesh and pours forth blood; and nothing is wanting for the children’s growth. Oh, the incredible mystery!” (Pædag. b. I. c. VI.)



St. Hippolytus. III. Cent. "His own divine flesh and his own precious blood he has given to us to eat and to drink for the remission of sins". (Frag. in Prov. IX.)

St. James of Nisibis, IV. Cent. "...But thou shouldst abstain from all uncleanness, and then take the body and blood of Christ, and cautiously guard thy mouth through which the King has entered etc." (Serm. III. de Jejun. n. 2.)

The Great St. Augustine, V. Cent. "In his own body and blood did our Lord will our salvation to be. But whence did he entrust to us his body and blood? Out of his humility. For unless he were humble he would neither be eaten or drunk by us". (IV. Enar. in Psalm. XXXIII. Serm. I.)

I have cited but one Father living in each of the five first centuries of Christianity. Let me recommend the II. Vol. of "The Faith of Catholics", pges 191—385. I will gladly give the use of this valuable work to anyone who is desirous of knowing the true beliefs of "Primitive Christianity".

It is not my purpose to prove the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation. Permit me to refer you to our Catechisms; "Card. Wiseman's Lectures"; "The Path which lead a Protestant Lawyer etc." by Ex-Gov. Burnett, or to any Catholic theological work.

Preacher. Christ ordained but two sacraments but the Church of Rome during the Dark ages added five more.

Priest. The "Dark" ages again! But your assertion is again untrue. The Church never added any Sacraments to those instituted by Christ, and He instituted just Seven Sacraments, of which some Protestants retain five, others three, others two, others one, and the majority. I fear, none at all. It is not my intention to prove the Catholic doctrine on the Holy Sacraments. References as

given before. Permit me, historically to show your statement is untrue.

The Greek Church separated from the Roman Catholic in the 9th Century. The Greeks have seven Sacraments, the same as the Catholics. To say that five were added by both after the Separation would be absurd. There were therefore seven Sacraments in the 9th Century. The Nestorian and Monophysite heretics were expelled from the Church in the 4th and 5th Centuries. Some of these still exist in the East, and, strange to say, also have seven Sacraments. Evidently, they took these Sacraments with them when they left the Catholic Faith. But this was before the dreadful "Dark" ages: therefore the Catholic Church did not add five Sacraments as asserted by the preacher. A little better acquaintance with the doctrines of "Primitive Christians" would save many from making, what in reality, are very silly assertions.

Preacher. The doctrine that the Virgin Mary was conceived and born without sin was made an article of Faith by Pius IX. about 25 years ago.

Priest. Must again remind you that neither Pope nor Church make new articles of Faith — as you insinuate. On the 8th of December 1854 (therefore about 34 years ago) Pius IX. declared that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. M. was revealed by God, always believed by the Church, and hence it became an Article of Faith to all who were children of Christ's Church. Pius did no more in the 19th Century than Peter, the first Pope, had done in the 1st Century. Please read Chap. XV. of the Acts. All doctrines defined in the course of Ages by the Church were contained in and are a part of the Deposit of Faith revealed originally by God — in the same way as all the beauty of a full-bloomed rose is contained in the rose-bud.

**P r e a c h e r.** Protestants deny no doctrine taught in the Scriptures or by the Apostles.

**P r i e s t:** Do you mean to admit that some doctrines not contained in the Scriptures were taught by the Apostles? Tradition once more! But beware of the next Synod! Protestants: all? There are thousands who call themselves Protestants who deny the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the efficacy and necessity of good works etc. Are these doctrines taught in the Scriptures? But perhaps you only referred to "orthodox" Protestants. There are so very many sects and denominations that it is very difficult to find out what each believes. Without entering into the subject more in detail: does it not strike you as a little odd that these warring sects should believe all the doctrines of the Bible and yet not agree to unite? Perhaps it is a difference in name only? But then greater difficulties would arise. Why did Calvin burn poor Servetus? Why all these troubles between the Episcopalians and other Protestants sects in England? Why did the Puritans leave their native soil in Europe and then cruelly persecute Roger Williams and other Baptists, Quakers etc. in New England? It was all because they accused each other of denying the doctrines you say Protestants believe. Your bold assertion disproves itself. Let me add: There is scarcely one Scriptural doctrine which is not denied by one or more of the Protestant Sects. To this: if you sift the doctrines of all the sects and put what is true in each together — you will have all the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Lord Ripon it was, if I am not mistaken, who tested the truth of the last assertion, and became a Catholic — preferring to have the whole truth unmixed with error in One Church, to little fragments mingled with much falsehood — as he found it in the various sects.



It must be evident to every reader that your letter, short as it is, contains many grave and palpable untruths: without further comment, I leave you to your own thoughts. In conclusion, let me repeat the earnest words of Dr. Silliman Ives, once Protestant Episcopal bishop of N. C. — a convert to the Catholic Church in whose communion he lived a fervent, humble life and died a peaceful, happy death. —

“Strive, my dear friends, to realize the immense value of the soul, the utter worthlessness comparatively of all earthly things; the dreadful idea of its loss, the unspeakable wisdom of holding ourself ready to sacrifice all other things for its salvation . . . . I loved you well, I have labored for you earnestly and now I feel it to be a privilege too great for human tongue to express to be able each day to plead in your behalf the sacrifice of a present God and Savior; yea, to plead that he may ere long through the riches of his own mercy and the power of his condescending love make you partakers of the new and unutterable joy which I now feel when I declare before God that: ‘I believe in One Catholic Apostolic Church’.” (Troubles of a Mind.) *Trials*

**F. FELIX, O. S. B.**







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Hintemeyer, Felix.

A reply to a Gaston Co.  
preacher, by Rev. F. Felix.

